



## Marker Text

Site of depot for canal which passed through town at foot of Main Street. Operations through Petersburg ceased 1860. Constructed 1832-1853, canal was nation's longest, connecting Lake Erie at Toledo with Ohio River at Evansville, through Fort Wayne, Lafayette, and Terre Haute.

## Report

The marker text lacks context, leaving the reader with a number of questions, and misses an opportunity to convey the canal's economic impact upon the state. As a result of the canals, thousands of jobs were provided, hundreds of businesses were created, and Hoosier products were sent beyond the borders of the state.

In the 1876 *Indiana State Atlas*, the site mentioned in the first line of the text is referred to as the Canal Port Addition. The map clearly shows the canal at the foot of Main Street.<sup>1</sup> More research is needed to determine if the canal was closed in Petersburg in 1860, although it most likely was. The entire southern division of the canal was in desperate need of repair in the 1860 chief engineer's report.<sup>2</sup> The report has no direct statement that the canal at Petersburg was closed. However, the 1861 chief engineer's report for the southern division states, ". . . With the exception of about thirty miles between Pigeon Reservoir and Evansville, in which the water is still maintained, this division has received no attention from the repair contractors and is entirely useless. The breach at Prairie Creek aqueduct, reported last year, has not been repaired. This cuts off the supply of water thence to Pigeon Reservoir [at Evansville]. . ."<sup>3</sup> The statement, constructed 1832-1853, canal was nation's longest, connecting Lake Erie at Toledo with Ohio River at Evansville, through Fort Wayne, Lafayette, and Terre Haute, is true.<sup>4</sup>

## Additional Sources

J. Darrell Bakken, *Now that Time Has Had Its Say: A History of the Indianapolis Central Canal, 1835-2002* (Bloomington, J. Darrell Bakken, Consolidated City of Indianapolis, Department of Waterworks d/b/a Indianapolis, 2003).

Paul Fatout, *Indiana Canals* (West Lafayette, Purdue University Press, 1985) Digitized, June 2, 2010.

"Wabash and Erie Canal Company Records, 1833-1837" (Bulk 1833-1862), Manuscripts and Archives Department, William Henry Smith Memorial Library, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana. Collection #M 0758,OM 0392

## Links

"Canal Society of Indiana," accessed <http://www.indcanal.org/>

"The Wabash and Erie Canal: Fort Wayne on the Old Canal," accessed <http://archive.org/details/wabasheriecanalf00publ>



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“The Wabash and Erie Canal through Huntington, Indiana,” accessed <http://www.terrypepper.com/w&e/boats.htm>

“Welcome to the Wabash and Erie Canal,” [Delphi] accessed <http://www.wabashanderiecanal.org/>

“Welcome to Princeton,” accessed [http://princeton-indiana.com/pages/history/history-pages/wabash\\_and\\_erie\\_canal.htm](http://princeton-indiana.com/pages/history/history-pages/wabash_and_erie_canal.htm)

“Wabash and Erie Canal Trails, Evansville,” accessed <http://southernindianatrails.freehostia.com/eriecanal.htm>

*Canal Mania in Indiana*, accessed <http://www.in.gov/history/2409.htm#transportation>

*Canal Construction in Indiana*, accessed <http://www.in.gov/history/2409.htm#transportation>

*Indiana Documentary Journals 1835-1909*, accessed <http://www.in.gov/library/4066.htm>

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<sup>1</sup> “Historic Map, Pike County, Petersburg,” *Indiana State Atlas 1876* (Chicago, Baskin, Forester and Company, 1876) Historic Map Works, accessed <http://www.historicmapworks.com/Map/US/43313/Pike+County,+Petersburg>; State of Indiana vs Myrtle Huntman, Pike County Circuit Court, n.d. In this court case a Samuel E. Dillon testifies to the location of the Wabash and Erie Canal in Petersburg. He states, “Yes, Sir, the canal was at the foot of Main Street.” Dillon had practiced law in Petersburg for forty years, going to Petersburg in 1900. He surveyed the canal for a road.

<sup>2</sup> Jessie L. Williams, “Report of Chief Engineer,” January 4, 1861, *Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Wabash and Erie Canal for the Year 1860* (Indianapolis, John C. Walker, State Printer, 1861) p. 285, accessed <http://archive.org/details/documentaryjournl1860indi>

<sup>3</sup> Jessie L. Williams, “Report of Chief Engineer,” December 12, 1861, *Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Wabash and Erie Canal for the Year 1861* (Indianapolis, Berry R. Sulgrove, State Printer, 1862) p. 386, accessed <http://archive.org/details/documentaryjournl18601861indi>

<sup>4</sup> “Canal Society of Indiana,” accessed <http://www.indcanal.org/canals-wabash-erie.html>. States, “. . . By 1853, Wabash and Erie Canal, America’s longest at approximately 460 miles, linked Lake Erie at Toledo, Ohio with Ohio River at Evansville. . . .”; “The Erie Canal,” accessed <http://www.eriecanal.org/> States, “. . . The resulting canal was completed in 1918, and is 12 to 14 feet deep, 120 to 200 feet wide, and 363 miles long, from Albany to Buffalo. . . .”; “Canal Lands, Ohio State Parks,” Ohio Department of Natural Resources, <http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/parks/canallands/canalhistory/tabid/22230/Default.aspx>. States, “. . . On July 3, 1827, two years after the ground breaking, Governor Trimble and the canal commission boarded a canal boat in Akron and the next day arrived in Cleveland. By 1832 the entire 308 mile route of the Ohio-Erie was open to traffic. . . .” *Terre Haute Wabash Courier*, July 13, 1850. “. . . We have the pleasure of announcing that an important division of forty-two miles, between Terre Haute



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and Point Commerce, had been completed and water let into it. We now have a continuous canal-the whole in navigable order-from Toledo to Point Commerce, Indiana, a distance of three hundred and fifty-two miles. Point Commerce is one hundred and ten miles [to ]Evansville on the Ohio river, the southern terminus of the Wabash and Erie Canal-the longest canal in the United States. . . .”; “Resident Engineer’s Report to Chief Engineer,” December 15, 1853,” *Annual Report of the Board of Internal Improvement*, December 28, 1853 (Indianapolis, Austin H. Brown, State Printer, 1853) pp. 845-51. Report states, “. . . On Thursday evening, September 22, the ‘Pennsylvania’ charge of Capt. Sharra, arrived at Evansville, having made the first trip through the entire canal . . . .”